

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Canceled)

2. (Previously Amended) In a computing system for processing information loaded as cursive text, a method for recognizing the cursive text to provide digital information corresponding to the cursive text, the method comprising:

loading into the computing system an image of an input phrase of cursive text;
identifying features of the input phrase, each feature representing at least a portion of a character in the input phrase;

matching features of the input phrase against features of a plurality of reference phrases and generating a holistic answer list containing as answers reference phrases that are most similar to the input phrase along with a confidence value, the confidence value for each answer being a measure of similarity between features of the input phrase and the features of the reference phrase;

constructing a character segmented features list from the features of the input phrase and from the holistic answer list, the character segmented features list being a list of character feature sets segmented by characters in each answer from the holistic answer list;

translating the image of the input phrase into images of a characters segmented according to answers in the holistic answer list based upon the character segmented features list;

analytically recognizing characters in the input phrase from the images of characters segmented according to answers in the holistic answer list and generating an analytical answer list containing analytical answers for the input phrase, each analytical answer having a confidence value as a measure of the similarity between a characters in the analytical answer and characters in a reference phrase; and

finding the best recognition answer from the answers on both the holistic answer list and the analytic answer list.

3. (Currently Amended) In a handwritten character recognition system a method for recognizing an input word of handwritten text in an image provided to the recognition system, the method comprising:

identifying from the input word image an input string of metastrokes where each metastroke represents a portion of an alphanumeric character in the text;

storing the input string of metastrokes as character features ~~images~~;

comparing as a whole the input string of metastrokes to a prototype string of metastrokes for reference words to generate a first recognition answer list having a plurality of possible answers;

creating a plurality of character segmentation ~~hypothesis~~ hypotheses based on character segmented metastrokes for answers in the first recognition answer list;

translating each character segmentation hypothesis into character cutout images of the input word;

recognizing characters from the character cutout images and generating a plurality of character variants for each character position in the input word based on each segmentation hypothesis;

interpreting the plurality of character variants of the input word for each segmentation hypothesis based on a vocabulary and generating a second recognition answer list having a plurality of possible answers; and

finding a best answer from the first and second answer lists as the recognition of the input word.

4. (Canceled)

5. (Currently Amended) The ~~apparatus~~ method of claim 1 ~~2~~, wherein ~~means for the act of finding~~ comprises:

~~means for~~ matching one or more recognition answers of the ~~first~~ holistic answer list to one or more recognition answers of the ~~second~~ analytic answer list to generate one or more matching answer pairs, each matching answer pair having an associated combined confidence value; and

~~means for~~ evaluating the combined confidence value associated with each matching answer pair to designate a matching answer pair having a highest combined confidence value as the best recognition answer.

6. (Currently Amended) The ~~apparatus~~ method of claim 5, wherein the combined confidence value associated with each matching answer pair is defined by an average of the confidence values of the recognition answer of the first answer list and the recognition answer of the second answer list of the matching answer pair.

7. (Currently Amended) The ~~apparatus~~ method of claim 5, wherein the ~~means for act of finding~~ further comprises:

~~means for~~ testing the highest combined confidence value against a next to highest combined confidence value to define an answer separation value; and

~~means for~~ rejecting the matching word pair associated with the highest combined confidence value as the best recognition answer if the answer separation value is less than a predetermined threshold value.

8. (Currently Amended) The ~~apparatus~~ method of claim 1 ~~2~~, wherein the ~~means for act of finding~~ comprises:

~~means for~~ evaluating a highest confidence value of the ~~first~~ holistic answer list and a highest confidence value of the ~~second~~ analytical answer list against a probability algorithm to identify the best recognition answer for the string of characters.

9. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, wherein the input phrase and each reference phrase is a series of alphanumeric characters and spaces that make up a word, a sequence of words, one or more numbers, or a mix of words, alphabetic characters and numbers.

10. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3 further comprising:
identifying each of the plurality of possible answers of the first recognition answer list with a metastroke confidence value corresponding to a degree of similarity between the metastrokes representing the input word and the prototype string of metastrokes associated with each possible answer in the first recognition answer list; and

identifying each of the plurality of possible answers of the second recognition answer list with a confidence value based on a character recognition confidence value of each character variant in each possible answer in the second recognition answer list, the character recognition confidence value corresponding to a degree of similarity between the character variant and the matched character cutout image.

11. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 10, wherein the operation of identifying each of the plurality of possible answers of the second recognition list comprises:

combining the character recognition confidence value of each character variant in each of the plurality of possible answers of the second recognition answer list to generate a resultant confidence value for each of the plurality of possible answers.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11, wherein the finding operation comprises:

matching one or more possible answers of the first recognition list to one or more possible answers of the second recognition list to produce one or more matching answer pairs;

combining the metastroke confidence value associated with the possible answer of the first recognition answer list and the resultant confidence value associated with the possible answer of the second recognition answer list in each matching pair to define a combined confidence value for each pair; and

designating the matching answer pair having a highest combined confidence value as the recognition of the input word.

13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12, wherein the finding operation further comprises:

testing the highest combined confidence value against a next to highest combined confidence value to define an answer separation value; and

rejecting the matching word pair associated with the highest combined confidence value as the recognition of the input word if the answer separation value is less than a predetermined threshold value.